



F I S H E R

June 28, 2005

File Electronically Via ECFS

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
9300 East Hampton Drive
Capitol Heights, MD 20743

Re: Creation Of A Low Power Radio Service
MM Docket 99-25
Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I'm writing in response to the Commission's *Second Order on Reconsideration and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* in MM Docket 99-25, regarding the possibility of affording Low Power FM stations a priority over FM translators in the use of the FM spectrum.¹

Fisher Radio Regional Group Inc. operates 24 radio stations in small markets in Montana and central Washington. Because of the unique topography of the mountainous region in which we operate, FM translators are – in many cases – a necessity in order for the people within our stations' 60 dBU contours to be able to actually receive our stations. I'll give you two examples, both in the beautiful town of Missoula, MT.

KGGL is a full class-C FM station licensed to Missoula. Its antenna sits above the Snowbowl Ski area, about 12-miles northwest of Missoula. From this mountain-top site, the station serves a large area of western Montana. However, downtown Missoula and the campus of the University of Montana are situated directly south of a hill which blocks them from the KGGL transmission site. As a result, the station is difficult to receive without serious multi-path in that area. The only way people in this important part of our city of license can hear the station clearly is via a translator.

KXDR is a class C-2 FM station licensed to Hamilton, Montana. Its transmission site sits atop Read Butte, half-way between Hamilton (population 3,705) and Missoula (population 57,053). While this site provides a clear signal directly into Hamilton, there

¹ The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was released by the Commission on March 17, 2005 and published in the Federal Register on July 7, 2005.

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1212 N. WASHINGTON, SUITE 307 SPOKANE, WASHINGTON 99201

TEL 509.343.9500 FAX 509.343.9501 WEB www.fisherradio.com

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is a large mountain between the site and Missoula. As a result, the people in most of Missoula cannot hear KXDR's primary signal at all, even though Missoula is well within the 60 dBu contour of the station. Thankfully, we have a translator in Missoula, re-broadcasting KXDR's signal.

Both of these stations are **locally-programmed** and highly rated.

In addition to our own fill-in translators, there are other translators owned by community groups or individuals in small towns just outside of our primary coverage areas that have also put translators on the air. These provide a genuine service by allowing people to hear nearby radio stations when their own communities have no stations – or few stations – of their own.

My understanding is that translators are especially numerous in the western United States, due to our mountainous terrain. It happens that in most of these same mountainous cities and towns, there are not many radio stations, as the population is relatively small. In these markets, particularly, it's critically important that the local population be able to continue listening to the interference-free FM signals to which they have grown accustomed. To take away the licenses of these translators, and take this popular local programming away from the citizens of our communities, would be unfair to all the people of the communities, and to the local broadcasters who serve them. The people in these areas rely on these locally programmed stations for news, weather, information and entertainment programming.

Translators need to be protected, just as their primary stations' service areas are protected. LPFM stations should not get priority status over translators. It would be very unfair, and clearly against the public interest, to take away the translators that have served their communities for years. Particularly in mountainous regions, those translators often provide the only means by which the primary stations can serve the complete area they're licensed to serve.

Thank you for allowing me to share this perspective.

Sincerely,



Larry Roberts
President
Fisher Radio Regional Group Inc.